[Medieval Georgia]

● 566 The word qma or Qrma in the sense of serf as here is first used in *The Life of St. Shushaniki the Queen.* In the translations of the Bible, however, with a very few exceptions, it is invariably used in the sense of "the child". The word used in the early literary sources to denote slave is *mona.* It must therefore be deduced that the original Georgian word designating slave was *mona* and not *qma.* Later however *qma* supersedes *mona* and in this new sense of "slave" or "serf" it was frequently used in the documents dating from the eighth and ninth centuries so that it must have come into general use in the eighth century at least, if not before. In the documents dating from the eleventh century very often *glekhi* is used instead of *qma.* Writers such as Grigol Merchuli and Basil Zarzmeli do not use the term *glekhi* nor is it used by any other earlier writers. It is used for the first time in the *sigelni* of the Catholicos Melkisedeki in the year 1020. In the earlier sources different words are used in place of *glekhi*, namely *mdabioi*, "the low", by Merchuli; *dsurilni erni*, "the small people", in the *Matiane Kartlisai*; and *erni msoplioni*, "the people of the villages", by Sumbat Davitisdze.

All *qmani* did not enjoy the same rights; their position differed in accordance with the conditions on which their *qmoba* was based. Thus there were,

Nebierni qmani,
Nasqidni qmani,
Shedsirulni qmani,
Shedsqalebulni qmani,
Nadsqalobevi qmani,
Sheudzlebelni movaleni.

Among these *qmani* some were *siglosani*, that is holders of *sigelni* or charters, whose rights and duties were defined in writing; and some *ara-siglosani*, that is they held no charters and their rights and duties were defined verbally and according to the rule of custom.

A *nebieri qma* was one who entered into a patron-and-client relationship of his own free-will, in pursuance of his own wishes, and as such he had it entered in his contract that under certain circumstances he could resume his freedom.

The *nasqidi qma* or *glekhi*—the bought serf or peasant—occupied a much lower status. The fact that he had become a serf not of his own free-will but as a result of purchase would naturally alter his condition; and he had none of the

1: Allen H-4 (no date) 1932 RI1 Georgia RI1

[Medieval Georgia]

rights possessed by the *nebierni qmani*. Some of the bought peasants possessed their own lands, but the majority were landless and they received grants of land or other provision for maintenance from their patrons. At the time of buying, often, a special agreement was drawn showing the purpose for which a peasant was bought. If a patron required a man for some particular job he would naturally buy one skilled in that job. For instance, when Grigol Surameli the *Msakhurt-Ukhutsesi* built mills for the monastery of Shio-Mghvimé, he bought for these mills a "peasant-miller" and donated him to the monastery. This particular peasant then was bought as a professional, he was a miller skilled in the art of milling, besides which special duty he had no other duties to perform. From his descendants one member always had to be trained as a miller to serve in the mills.[1]

566

Shedsirulni qmani or dedicated serfs were serfs consecrated to the churches and monasteries. The rights and duties of such serfs were always put down in writing and clearly defined and limited in the dedicatory *sigelni* or charters. Their status was therefore permanent and unchangeable. A dedicated *qma* or peasant was consequently always a *siglosani qma*. It, however, must not be understood that every *siglosanni* serf was a dedicated serf. As the dedicated serfs were meant for the redemption and repose of the souls of the dead, their duty was to provide food, wine and other provisions for the dedicator's *aghapi* and to assist in every way in the annual memorial services. The dedicators when consecrating their serfs took special care that the *shedsirulni* were placed in good circumstances in order that they on their part might retain good memories of their late patrons and might pray for the blessing of their souls. The patrons, therefore, freed such serfs from all services and tributes due from them. Moreover, they endeavoured to obtain for them exemption or even complete immunity from taxation. The dedicator himself defined the rights and duties of the dedicated serf who usually was enjoined, as already stated, to provide the monastery with a certain quantity of bread and wine and once or twice a year with anything else that might be necessary for the service of a requiem mass and the preparation of *aghapi* for the brotherhood of the monastery and the destitute. The duties once defined by the dedicator were not subject to alteration either by the monastery or by anyone else. In a *sigeli*, dated 1202, it is stated that Anton Dchqon-

566
792

[1] *Book of Donations of the Year 1250 of Grigol Surameli*, edited by S. Kakabadze, p. 7.

1: Allen H-4 (no date) 1932 RI1 Georgia RI1

[Medieval Georgia]

566 dideli, the *Mdsignobart-Ukhutsesi*, built an aqueduct for the 792 monastery of Shio-Mghvimé, dedicating at the same time Giorgi and Yaberi with their respective households, whose duties, specified by Antoni himself, were to look after the aqueduct. Except this, in the words of the dedicator himself—

> "No other service of any kind whatsoever is to be imposed upon them".
>
> "I fixed", says he, "as their duty the service of the aqueduct. From each of the two households one of the sons must be trained as an aqueduct fitter and thus maintain it in good working condition." [1]

Looking after the aqueduct was not then the duty of every member of the two households, but only of two, one from each, and each generation of each household was to provide one trained fitter to the monastery. The other members, while they were required to help in maintaining the aqueduct in good condition, could choose whatever profession they liked and do generally as it pleased them, the monastery having no other rights over them.

It is obvious that the owners of *shedsirulni qmani* could only have been the churches, the monasteries and charitable institutions. As the *shedsirulni qmani* were dedicated to secure the "redemption of the soul" and for the *aghapi* of their donors the monasteries and churches more particularly favoured were those that were renowned for their miracle-working icons or for the purity of their monastic life. For this reason the more renowned a monastery or a church was the more donations and dedications it received in the shape of lands and *qmani*. As a result of these customary dedications the Georgian Church early became the most powerful individual "patron" of serfs within the Kingdom.

566 *Shedsqalebulni qmani* constituted a particular group of *qmani*. The duty of all *qmani* towards their patrons was a loyal service. *Qmani* were important not only economically, but also from a military point of view. The power of a patron depended on the number of *qmani* he possessed and on the loyalty and devotion they showed. During a war *qmani* fought alongside their respective patrons. In recognition of devoted service, a patron would grant a gift of land, elevation in his service, immunity or some other favour, and *qmani* so rewarded were called *shedsqalebulni*. The act of conferring

[1] See *Istoriuli Sabutebi Shio-Mghvimis Monastrisa* (*The Historical Documents of the Monastery of Shio-Mghvime*), by Th. Jordania, p. 28.

l: Allen H-4 (no date) 1932 RI1 Georgia RI1

[Medieval Georgia]

such favours was called *shedsqaleba* and the *sigeli* granting it—*dsqalobis-sigeli*. *Shedsqaleba* was practised widely in Georgia as well by the kings as by patrons, great and small. *Shedsqaleba* indeed became a powerful political factor as we shall presently see in the hands of the kings and was used to the advantage of the *msakhuri* class as against the *aznauri*.

A separate group of *qmani* was constituted by the so-called *Nadsqalobevi qmani*. In the Code of Laws of Wakhtang VI (1703–24) these *qmani* were called *dsqalobis qmani*. Whether the same term was used in ancient times is not yet definitely known. A *nadsqalobevi qma* was one given away as a gift by way of *shedsqaleba*; such a *qma* was given by a patron to another loyal and *shedsqalebuli qma*.

Insolvency was one of the primary causes of the enserfment of free men. An insolvent debtor "*is slave of his creditor and a slave bought whose service is never-ending*" states one of the documents. This occurred often when money was borrowed at compound interest. Compound interest has this peculiarity that it "*early begins to accumulate and infinitely multiplies the original*". Thus because of the rapid increase by successive additions of the interest to the original loan, the debtor was in the end confronted with the payment of so great a sum that often he was unable to settle it and in consequence either he was compelled to become his creditor's slave or he died before he could effect a settlement of any kind. Then, to quote our source, "before the eyes unfolded the sight pitiable, the free sons for the debts of their fathers were taken for sale".[1]

A landowner would place a *qma* on his land only when it was vacant. The act of so placing a *qma* was called "placing or settling upon the land".[2]

Tributes or taxes paid by the peasants for holding lands for cultivation were called *begara*. *Begara* was of different kinds. A *begara* levied for holding vineyards was called *kalukhi* and for holding ordinary fields *ghala*.

The holding of lands subject to the payment of *begara* called in Georgian *sabegrod gatsema* did not necessarily entail the relation of serf to patron. The patron-client relationship demanded service or to use the Georgian expression "the slavish service" of a *qma*, and of a patron the placing or settlement of such a peasant on his land. *Sabegrod gatsema*

[1] See the eleventh-century *sigeli* of Nicortsminda in Jordania's *Kronikebi*, II, 47.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 135.

1: Allen H-4 (no date) 1932 RI1 Georgia RI1

[Medieval Georgia]

● 566 427 does not seem, so far as can be deduced from the eleventh-century *sigelni* of Nicortzminda,[1] to have involved either of these conditions.

[1] See the eleventh-century *sigelni* of Nicortzminda in Jordania's *Kronikebi*, II, 48.

1: Allen H-4 (no date) 1932 RI1 Georgia RI1

[Medieval Georgia]

CHAPTER XXII

THE INSTITUTION OF PATRONQMOBA

566 THE term "feudalism" is rendered in Georgian by *patron-*
567 *qmoba*, which is a compound word consisting of *patroni* and
631 *qmoba*. *Qmoba* is the abstract form of *qma*, the serf or slave,
423 and means serfdom or slavery. The word *patroni* is the Georgian variant of the Roman *patronus* and is first met with in Georgian documents dating from the eleventh century.

571 As the etymological meaning of the word indicates *patron-qmoba* denoted an organization or society based on the relationship between master and slave. The word *patroni* had several meanings. It denoted:—

1. A private owner or possessor, as for instance *tsikhis patroni*—owner of a fortress: *midsis patroni*—owner of land.
2. A tutor, protector or guardian: *Matiane Kartlissi*, for instance, relating the way in which Giorgi, the minor heir-apparent of Bagrat IV, was brought up, says, "They chose the sister of Bagrati as his *patroni* or tutoress".[1]

[643] 3. A king or sovereign: the historian of King David Aghmashenebeli, speaking of the service rendered to the King by Giorgi Dchqondideli, the *Mdsignobart-Ukhutsesi*, says that "he was from boyhood in the service of the *patroni*", i.e. of the King.[2] The Historian of Queen Tamara (1184–1212) uses *patroni* particularly frequently in the sense of "king" or "queen".[3]

Patroni thus denoted not only an owner, protector and guardian, but also even the supreme ruler of the country, the King himself. The *didebulni* officials and the powerful *gvarishvilni* ("sons of *gvarni*") were also, like the kings, called *patroni*.

631 Just as *patroni* denoted owner, protector, guardian, lord
566 and king, so the term *qma* also in its turn was used to denote
423 "a subject", even though he were a *didebuli aznauri* or a *dide-*
571 *buli* official. The Historian of Queen Tamara speaks, for instance, of the Queen's *didebulni*, namely of Zakharia Panaskerteli and Daniel Kalmakheli as "the good *qmani*, the favoured of the *patroni*", that is as of good subjects of the sovereign. The Historian of Queen Tamara calls the Shirvanshah, whose

[1] *Matiane Kartlissi*, p. 226.
[2] *Istoriani da Azmani*, p. 418.
[3] *Tzkhovrebai Mepet-Mepisa Davitisa*, p. 301.

1: Allen H-4 (no date) 1932 RI1 Georgia RI1

[Medieval Georgia]

631 566 423 571

domains were under the Queen's protection, "the *qma* of Tamara the King", while he describes his condition as *qmad qola*—holding as *qma*.

Just as the King was *patroni* of his *didebuli* subjects, so the latter, the *qmani didebulni*, were in their turn *patronni* (plural) of their subordinates, who also were called *qmani*. The *qmani* too had their own *qmani* and were consequently *patronni* in their turn.

Patronqmoba was the mainspring of the public life of the country. It characterized not only the social and economic life but also the political and state order of the Kingdom. *Patroni* denoted, as it has already been seen, the king, the lord, the guardian, the protector and the owner-proprietor, while *qma* meant the subject as well as the one under the protection of another or owning obedience to another.

The characteristic features of *patronqmoba* in Georgia, as of feudalism in Western Europe, were twofold, namely the personal relation and the land relation; to the personal aspect of the institution of *patronqmoba*, as affecting the individual, reference has already been made. The other aspect of the institution relating to the holding of land was called in Georgian *shedsqaleba* which in meaning and substance is equivalent to the early Western European *beneficium* or the later *feudum*.

Shedsqaleba was particularly important to the high and influential officials of the state. As "the loyal and faithful service" of the great officials was of great value to the King he would naturally bestow *shedsqaleba*, or benefices, mostly on these high officials, and the King's *shedsqalebulni*—*beneficiarii*—were generally the great state officials and members of the aristocracy to whom fell the greater part of benefices.

Shedsqaleba was the very essence of *patronqmoba*, and it is necessary to examine the working of it in order to arrive at a correct understanding of the character of feudal institutions in Georgia. The Historian of Queen Tamara, for instance, states that the Queen *sheidsqala* Guzani, "*Patroni* of Shavsheti and Klarjeti to the seat of the ancient Tao(khi)an kings".[1] *Sheidsqala*, which is the past perfect tense of *shedsqaleba*, is herein used in the sense of "elevated". Guzani was appointed the *eristavt-eristavi* of the province of Tao. *Shedsqaleba* thus meant the conferring by the King of a high office.

Another passage from the same source shows that *sheds-*

[1] *Istoriani da Azmani*, p. 434.

[Medieval Georgia]

631 *qaleba* or *dsqaloba* was followed by blessing. Of Zakharia
566 Mkhargrdzeli the Annalists write that the Queen "conferred
423 *dsqaloba* by blessing upon his son, Zakharia, also"; else-
571 where again it is stated that she "*sheidsqalnes* and blessed many other *didebulni* also".[1] Blessing or *dalotsva* on occasion formed part of the ceremony of conferring of every high office.

Those of the lesser *qmani* who showed great zeal, loyalty and devotion were, of course, correspondingly *shedsqalebulni*. If a *qma* who had distinguished himself received such a favour for the first time, he was *shedsqalebuli* by being newly blessed, or if he already held some office, or was entrusted with another duty he was *shedsqalebuli momatebita*, that is "additionally".

[554] At the time of blessing the beneficiary or *shedsqalebuli* received from his lord ceremonial investiture; for instance, the *Mandaturt-Ukhutsesi* was presented with a gold ferule; the *Amir-Spasalari* received a golden sword. The *eristavni* and *eristavt-eristavni* had a banner each as an ensign which distinguished their office and, although direct information is not available, it is probable that they received this symbol from the King at the time of investiture.

It is not known whether the *shedsqalebuli* took the oath of fealty, but it is certain that at the time of blessing *taqwaneba* —adoration—was laid down as a rule.

631 The holding of lands and provinces was directly connected
554 with the holding of office. The lands or provinces so con-
428 nected with or dependent upon the office held by the *sheds-*
571 *qalebuli* were called *sapatio*, i.e. held in honour.
647 Besides these *sapatio* provinces and lands, the King's "loyal and devoted" state officers also received by way of *shedsqaleba* the so-called *sakharajoni*. *Sakharajo* is derived from *kharaji*, meaning "the tax", and denotes "for *kharaji*"; *sakharajo* towns therefore constituted grants, the taxes from which the beneficiary could divert to his own benefit.

Sakharajo towns, fortresses and villages were granted to *shedsqalebulni* on different conditions, some as *sakutari*, meaning "own", and some as *sanakhevrot*, meaning "for half". *Sakutari*—own—should not be understood as if the grantee received the towns as his own possessions. The term has no relation to the actual ownership of the places granted; it implies only that the whole of the taxes collected from them were given to the recipient as his own for his own use, while in the case of *sanakhevrot* (for half)—granted towns the grantee

[1] *Istoriani da Azmani*, p. 442.

1: Allen H-4 (no date) 1932 RI1 Georgia RI1
[Medieval Georgia]

526 123 571

might be either simply *shedsqalebuli* or "superlatively" (*aghmatebit*) *shedsqalebuli*.

In time of war *qmani* fought alongside and under the leadership of their respective *patronni*. From the Historian of Queen Tamara, we learn that during military operations *qmani* closely surrounded their *patronni*; after a stiff hand-to-hand fight "rejoiced", says the Historian, "as finders . . . *patroni* of his *qma* and *qma* of his *patroni*";[1] and, as he states elsewhere, during a battle "*patroni* forged ahead of his *qma* and *qma* ahead of his *patroni*".[2]

Not only in war, but also in daily life when a *patroni* travelled, he was accompanied by his *qmani*. The suites of the great *didebulni* included *aznaurni*; such *aznaurni* were called *aznaurni tanamqolni* or accompanying, that is *aznaurni* companions; their duty was to defend their patrons. *Qmani* who lived on the estates of their patrons were called *mamulis katsni* or "men of the estates".[3]

Whether all the *mamulis katsni* were, irrespective of their status, obliged to accompany their patrons in war it is difficult to say, but it is certain that the bounden duty of *shedsqalebulni qmani* was "faithful service". This obligation of a *shedsqalebuli qma* was definitely stated in the *dsqalobis dsigni*.

As yet only one *dsgalobis dsigi* or "book" has been discovered which is of the first half of the thirteenth century. This document, which was granted by the Church, gives an incomplete, but fairly approximate idea as to the manner in which *dsqaloba* was bestowed. Only on exceptional occasions after great wars and expeditions, or particular and extraordinary service, was *dsqaloba* conferred by the *patroni* himself on his own initiative; on all other occasions of everyday life *dsqaloba* had to be solicited by the loyal and *msakhureuli qma* himself; his supplication and petition had to proceed by way of a reminder that the *patroni* might reward the *msakhureuli*, or deserving, *qma*. The Catholicos Mikel speaks thus, for instance, in his *dsaqolobis dzigi*:

> "When first the invasion of the Khorazmians and then that of the Tatars devastated this kingdom and laid waste some countries (i.e. provinces) and villages, and thou and thy brothers were overtaken by misfortune, and as a result had lost whatever lands and properties you possessed, and were unable in consequence to subsist . . . hast submitted to us thy supplication so that we might confer *dsqaloba* upon

[1] *Istoriani da Azmani*, p. 373.
[2] Abuseridze Tbeli, in *Kmelebi*, II, 120–7.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 421.

1: Allen H-4 (no date) 1932 R11 Georgia R11

[Medieval Georgia]

thee, Vaché Guaramisdze, and grant thee subsistence . . . *samamulot* to serve the Church. . . . We have listened to thy supplication and grant *samamulot* to thee Vaché Guaramisdze, our *Msakhurt-Ukhutsesi* and thy sons and descendants, the village of Oromasheni in return for services (*samsakhured*) to the Church." [1]

It has already been stated that *shedsqaleba* proved particularly beneficial to the high state officials and to the great *gvaristhvilni* and that to them fell the greater part of the benefices. *Shedsqaleba* enriched the "loyal and obedient" *gvariani* officials. From the works of the Historians of David Aghmashenebeli and Queen Tamara we learn that in the twelfth century, especially during the reigns of Giorgi III and his daughter, the over-generous use of *shedsqaleba* on the part of the kings, made it possible for an enormous amount of wealth both movable and immovable to accumulate in the hands of the *didebulni* and *shedsqalebulni*, rendering them owners of immense estates and of numerous *qmani*.

In order to curb the power of the grasping and unruly *didgvarianni* the kings began to follow a policy of replacing them by persons of *ugvaro* or *uazno* descent who were personally dependent on the goodwill of the Court. By means of *shedsqaleba* the King made strong his "loyal and faithful servant", enriched him materially and increased the number of his *qmani*. Thus by the side of the *didgvariani* officials there came into existence in each generation a group of *msakhureuli shedsqalebulni* who, although they lacked the distinction of birth and the influence of class, were at the same time very strong, since they had been raised to the patronage of numerous towns, fortresses and villages. But the over-generous character of the beneficence shown towards the promoted *ugvaro* officials and administrators in the end defeated its own purpose; and the system of *shedsqaleba* served to perpetuate those evils to eradicate which the kings had directed all their energies and their favours. *Shedsqaleba* gradually raised the new favourites, these *ugvaro* officials, to a position of influence and power; in course of time it concentrated in their hands new accumulations of wealth; the administrative positions which they held gained them a steadily increasing political influence, and their descendants, finding themselves in the position of great hereditary land-owners, easily forgot their *uazno* or *ugvaro* origins and their indebtedness to the Crown. In these circumstances their ambitions proved as matchless and their

[1] S. Kakabadze, *XIII Saukunis pirveli nakhevris Sakartvelos Katolikosebi* (*The Georgian Catholicoses of the first half of Thirteenth Century*).